Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

Vol. I. BOSTON, MASS., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1881. No. 6.

"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."
JOHN HAY.

On Picket Duty.

A law against blasphemy is its own violation; for, if there be a God, those who presume to add to his laws are the worst of blasphemers.

Those who would have the usurer rewarded for rendering a service always find it convenient to forget that the usurer's victims would not need his service were it not that the laws made at his bidding prevent them from serving themselves.

"The death of President Garfield has done more to kill the incipient poison that Col. Bob Ingersoll inoculated in the minds of the American people than the preaching of all the ministers could do," writes a correspondent of the Boston "Herald." Presumably by its establishment of the efficacy of prayer.

Prince Napoleon, the only one of the Bonapartes ever suspected of liberal tendencies, was one day discussing with Proudhon the latter's theories. Astonished at their audacity, the prince exclaimed: "What kind of a society, then, do you dream of, Monsieur Proudhon?" "Prince," answered the brave radical, in no wise abashed, "I dream of a society in which I should be guillotined as a conservative."

What place so honored as the little city of Besançon in France! It has given birth to three men perhaps the greatest of modern times. Charles Fourier, Victor Hugo, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, parent, poet, and philosopher of the socialism of to-day. A trinity of stars forming an unparalleled constellation. Happily Besançon is a city that honors its own prophets, being a stronghold of French radicalism. It might properly be the Mecca of the radicalism of the world.

A new subscriber sends us the following definition of Liberty: "Perfect Liberty is perfect obedience to natural law." With the intent and meaning of the author of this sentence we believe ourselves to be in entire sympathy, but it strikes us that he excellently describes the outcome and result of Liberty rather than defines Liberty itself. Is not the idea of choice, which is inseparable from Liberty, absent from his statement? Liberty knows of but one definition for itself: LIBERTY IS LIBERTY. As Josiah Warren remarks, "Liberty defined and limited by others is slavery."

A National Socialistic-Revolutionary Congress is to be held in Chicago, beginning October 21, for the purpose of forming an American federation of the International Working-People's Association recently reorganized at London. The initiative in calling the congress is taken by those groups which sent delegates from this country to the recent London congress. Socialistic groups and sections of all shades, provided they are weary of compromise and desire to accomplish the social revolution by means other than political action, are invited to send delegates to Chicago. Applications should be sent as soon as possible to A. Spies, 87 Fifth Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. We trust that no pains will be spared to make the congress a success in every sense of the word. Nothing is more essential to the achievement of our ends than the mutual understanding and intercommunication of socialists in all parts of the world, and no instrumentality was ever so effective in establishing this as the International Working-People's Association.

The fifth annual congress of the National Liberal League held at Chicago last week is said to have been more successful than any of its predecessors. T. B. Wakeman was chosen president, in place of Elizur Wright, who declined another term of office. Reports reach us of reconciliation of differences and restoration of harmony without any sacrifice of principle. We await with interest a statement of the basis on which these marvellous results have been effected.

A very acute thinker and one of Liberty's most devoted friends writes us, as if in criticism of something that we have said, that "the right to take usury must be defended on principles of Liberty." Will he favor us by pointing out where, as a legal or civil right, we have ever combatted it? We continually oppose the claim that one has a moral right to take usury, but advocate no method of abolishing it save the removal of all restrictions preventing the free action of natural principles. To attempt to suppress usury by statute is outrageous because tyrannical, and foolish because ineffectual.

The newspapers tells us that the American delegate to the Universal Socialistic Congress lately held at Chur, Switzerland, bemoaned the decline of socialism in the United States. His tears were wasted. There has been no decline of socialism in this country. There will be none. It is true that the party of State socialists whom he represents is fast dwindling into insignificance; but true socialism, the socialism that is based on Liberty, the socialism that means a further development of the idea of self-government, the socialism that is but another step in that path of progress whose freshest tracks are those of Jefferson and Paine, is growing every day. All other socialism is reactionary, and deserves its inevitable death.

The Detroit "National," Greenback organ, which wishes the government to run the railroads, manage the telegraph, and transact pretty much all the business of life, says that "certainly no private company could conduct the postal service so cheaply and satisfactorily as is now done." Evidently the editor has never seen the report of the special commissioner detailed by the department to examine the postal service of the Pacific coast. There he would find the statement that Wells, Fargo & Co. supply the inhabitants of that locality with mail facilities superior to the government's in promptness, security, and universality, and at rates that would be lower than the government's except for the enormous tax (just equal to the government's rates) imposed upon the business. He would find, too, the further statement that, even with so tremendous an advantage as this tax gives it, the government cannot successfully compete with this private firm. And yet it is to this branch of the government's work that the believers in State administration point with pride. We should like few things better than to see some competent business man go thoroughly into the subject, and point out the outrages, absurdities, and inconveniences of the management of our postal service. In the whole list of monopolies there is no greater sham.

About Progressive People.

Leo Hartmann, the Russian nihilist, sailed for Europe from New York on the 6th inst.

Garibaldi, who is now a constant sufferer from illness, is looking for a warm place wherein to spend the winter, Capri being too bleak.

Carlo Cafiero, one of the most active of Italian revolutionists, has been thrown into prison at Lugano, in company with several fellow agitators. The arrest took place at midnight, and for no assigned cause.

The president of the French republic has issued a decree authorizing the city of Guise to establish a national subscription for a monument to the memory of Camille Desmoulins, the first prominent instigator of the French Revolution, born at Guise, March 2, 1760.

On accusations preferred by B. Malon and supported by Lissagaray, the historian of the Commune of Paris, before a large meeting of the radicals of the French capital, Charles Lullier was expelled recently from the radical party for having betrayed the Commune in 1871.

Michael Morphy, who, some months after imprisonment for participation in a Socialist demonstration, was expelled from France, lately returned, and started a newspaper, styled "*La République Sociale*," in which he signed himself, "Rédacteur en Chef Delégué, Michel Morphy, expulsé de France." He was arrested while leaving M. Rochefort's house, and will be prosecuted for returning without permission.

Mrs. Besant delivered a lecture on "The Rights of Constituencies," in Bishop Auckland, England, lately. On the lecturer's appearance she was greeted with howls and hisses. Some of the more noisy were with great difficulty expelled by the police, but the disturbance was renewed, chairs and tables being broken, and about a dozen persons more or less seriously injured. The room was ultimately cleared, and Mrs. Besant delivered her lecture.

Rarely has any literary undertaking been pursued with such perseverance and industry as were bestowed by Littré upon his great dictionary of the French language. He is said to have worked upon it every night for years until 3 o'clock in the morning. The printing began in 1859, six years before the work was completed, and lasted until 1872, with two interruptions occasioned by the outbreak of the war between France and Germany and by the Commune in Paris, the one lasting about seven months and the other two. The printing was resumed before the reign of the Commune was over, and the proof-sheets were allowed to pass through the German lines from Paris to Versailles, where Littré was staying, and back. Littré was a member of the chamber of deputies, and is described as working placidly at his proof-sheets in his seat in the chamber amid the most violent and exciting scenes and debates. During the war with Germany he deemed it prudent to make a hasty retreat from the country house where he lived, upon the approach of the hostile army. During his absence the German troops entered the house, but upon his return he found that nothing had been taken away, and that his fine library was uninjured.

Victor Hugo lately went through a pretty scene at an asylum in Paris for the orphan children of actors. It was established by members of the profession, and is still poor; and the founders, therefore, appealed for help to the poet, whose fondness for children has earned for him the title of "*Grandpère de la France.*" The poet responded to the call, and paid what may be called an official visit to the institution. He was received by the little inmates with acclamations of joy. One of them, a charming girl of eight years, presented him with a handsome bouquet, and said: "*Maitre*, you have come to visit children, you the *Grandpère* who loves children so deeply, and who sings their praises so divinely, and these children belong to that artistic family of which you are the most glorious and striking expression. Permit us to tell you how profoundly grateful we feel, and to offer you this bouquet, the flowers of which say—'Forget us not; we shall never forget this memorable day when the poet of genius deigns to come and see little children.'" M. Victor Hugo, who, in the presence of children, is tenderness itself, literally wept as he took the little orphans up in his arms and kissed them. He promised to do all he could for the orphanage.

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Issued Fortnightly at Fifty Cents a Year; Single Copies, Two Cents.

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Office of Publication, 18 P. O. Square.
Post Office Address, LIBERTY, P. O. Box No. 3506, Boston, Mass.

Entered as Second Class Mail Matter.

BOSTON, MASS., OCTOBER 15, 1881.

"A free man is one who enjoys the use of his reason and his faculties; who is neither blinded by passion, nor hindered or driven by oppression, nor deceived by erroneous opinions."—PROUDHON.

Free Religion: Then, and Now.

Our faith comes in moments, our vice is habitual.—*Emerson.*

The editor of the "Free Religious Index," returning to his post after a protracted vacation, has heard of a late criticism of the Free Religious Association, which is that said Association "retains so few of the speakers whom people were accustomed and delighted to hear at its early conventions." He thinks this will "balance" the criticism that was made earlier in its history, "namely, that the same old stagers were brought out on the platform every year." But, fearing lest it will not, he asks if the last critic does not "set up a standard altogether too severe." He knows of "no society which holds the secret of remedy against the ravages of age, disease, and death among its speakers. Fourteen years have brought their inevitable changes on the platform of the Association." An "especially encouraging feature in the Association is that younger men and women, with fresh zeal and ability, are coming forward to take the place of the departed and the disabled"

As Liberty has a suspicion that the "Index" editor has ventured to peruse its columns, and has therein discovered the criticism he refers to, we will say a word or two that we think will be to the point.

True, Liberty did speak of the absence from the Free Religious Association's platform of the illustrious men who gave to "Free Religion," as it was called, its early and only claim to recognition. But not without a due understanding of the fact that, in good part, "age, disease, and death" had been the causes. It was not alone this fact of their non-appearance in Free Religious assemblages at the present time that aroused our attention; it was the far more significant fact that their "successors" are men and women of far different mould. The short and the long of it is,—the Free Religious Association has run very quickly the race all organized religions run; it has dropped down from the high region of ideas to the low wheelbarrow plane of propagandism. It says to itself to-day, "Now, we have got OUR IDEA; let us get money and 'younger men and women with fresh zeal and ability' to put it through." That is, it has thus early struck its limitation. Just like the old Unitarian movement out of whose loins it was born, it has lost its "moment of faith", and lives now only to exemplify "vice," which Emerson says is "habitual." Doubtless it will trundle along with its wheelbarrow-load of "good works" for a certain season, but the world will not much note the act, when here is that Corliss' Engine of a Church, the Roman Catholic, covering the earth with its vast array of god-like machinery, not to mention the "vice" vehicles of the whole Protestant world. But that early moment when *faith in ideas* had sway was all the contribution to human elevation it will ever get credit for. For out of it came inspirations, visions, and ideal strength, which, to the soul, is "meat and drink." But to-day what do these "younger men and women" offer the unheeding world? How do they propose to arrest attention? Why, they are at the old miserable trick of formulating "*Catechisms* for the Young." Heaven save the mark!—if it can; earth can't. That, and similarly depraved work. The child shall no more itself be an "ideal voyager," but shall sit down like a good little child in some Free Religious meeting-house, and be fed on what these "younger men and women with zeal" have "formulated." Yes, it is a fact; they are busy enough preparing Free Religious beans for the little ones: beans and bread; bread *they* themselves have browned, that there may be no mistake, and the little ones be saved from Error's indigestion. Ah! think of it. This is the "especially encouraging feature."

From John Weiss to this!

From Faith to Vice.

Faith would believe in the child, and inspire it with its own Liberty to range in the upper region of ideas, ever looking with its own eyes into the vastness of its own being.

Vice prepares a dose, and gives it.

That is Free Religion's mission to-day, as confessed by its "organizers."

For our part, we confess that the "old stagers on its platform" were far more interesting.

It is the difference between spontaneity and humdrum; life, and a slow-death; joyful health, and the "enthusiasm" of the religious disease; yea, between the world's Faith, and the world's Vice.

Authority.

The most deadly enemy of human progress is authority. It is incarnated in a million forms in every sphere of social growth. It arms itself with position, with titles, with heraldic emblems, with superstitions, lies, tricks, and trappings of all sorts Its source is human ignorance and credulity, and it is fed by the organized frauds who fatten on the spoils.

And yet authority, in itself, is not necessarily a dangerous principle. The great element of despotism in it lies in that false education which ignores the natural source of all true authority. The authority into which it is the purpose of Liberty to pour havoc and destruction is always an authority outside of the individual, never subject to his unconditional veto. To come to the point at once, the individual, and the individual alone, is the only true and inalienable source of authority, but can never assume to be authority to any one but himself without becoming a despot.

The first and foremost great fraud set up for purposes of plunder and slavery is God. Generally speaking, God is all things to all men, but, locally speaking, he is the particular thing for the particular field where the masses are to be gulled, robbed, and enslaved Once settled that he is authority,—that his word is from the beginning and infallible,—and the theological putty-workers easily mould him to suit the various natives.

Now, nothing permanent can ever be accomplished in reform until this central figurehead, posited beyond the veto power of the individual, is demolished. If any man wants a companion God for his entertainment and instruction, let him have one. It would be a denial of Liberty to interfere with him. But the moment he attempts to set that God up as unquestioned authority for others, he becomes a public enemy and a spiritual pirate.

God himself, being a pure fiction, is of course harmless in himself. But the practical power for despotism lies in the theological putty-workers who lobby around the throne for office. These fellows are something tangible. They can kick, bite, scratch, handle a rack, play sleight-of-hand tricks with wafers, and extort at wholesale. They become sacrament-grabbers (spiritual landlords), pew-rent sharks (spiritual rack-renters), and despotic fee-fiends (spiritual "gombeen men"). The success of the great spiritual steal is due largely to the decoration of their names with titles. It is Father A., Rev. Mr. B., Rt. Rev. Mr. C., his Reverence Mr. D., the Rev. Dr. E., Rev. Mr. F., D.D., *etc.*, *etc.*

Chiefly from the fact that the central figure, God, overshadows their ecclesiastical petticoats, but largely from the mysterious trappings and titles with which they endow themselves, these fellows become recognized as God's cabinet. The pope is the Almighty's secretary of state. He is prime minister of the spiritual kingdom. The Catholic clergy may be said to be the religious stalwarts, and the Protestant pastors the half-breeds. Enough, these ecclesiastical office-holders become authority, but, nevertheless, a kind of authority that can be reached and made to earn an honest living, if their victims can be induced to abolish the bogus fiction, God, behind them.

But it is by no means in the theological field alone that authority suppresses progress. We have a mental hierarchy in society scarcely less dangerous than the spiritual, and generally in alliance with it. This intellectual popery has its headquarters in the colleges, and illuminates its tricks to stultify with that professional whitewash known as scholarship. By a skilful use of titles, scholarly uniforming, and learned posing, mediocrity, narrowness, and hypocrisy manage to usurp the places of the world's truly great thinkers and broadly-educated men. The colleges, and the titled numskulls who run them, become authority, and the average man or woman who visits those public ignorance-nurseries called libraries must needs first consult the title-page of a book in order to gauge the depth of thought in it by the length of the author's titles and the standing of the college which endowed him with them.

Liberty is the sworn enemy of titles. It demands their immediate and unconditional surrender. Not that we deny the right of an individual (for himself) to carry as many titles to his name as he chooses; but no man who attaches Rev., D.D., LL.D., M.D., or any other heads and tails to his social kite has the right to ask anybody else to use them in addressing him. When the social heresy and mischief of such priestly and scholarly tricks become evident in the light of Liberty, these mental popes and priests will find it difficult to steal into the popular mind without paying Nature's required admission fee of merit

Even outside of recognized orthodoxy in religion and education there is a numerous set of *quasi* liberals, who attempt to steal the livery of authority through what they choose to call "culture." Abbot of the "Index" became so puffed up with culture that he finally went up and drifted away. Many of the present participants in the so-called Free Religious movement have culture on the brain, to an extent that renders them quite as worthless as, and vastly more contemptible than the learned dolts whom Wendell Phillips called to order last summer at Harvard College. The spirit of popery among professing liberals is more insulting than in any other place This eternal harping on culture which has been the key note of the "Free Religious Index" since its rise is simply a surreptitious attempt to make culture an authority in the place of the D.D.s, LL.D.s, and other devices of the orthodox. Abbot's attempt to organize his culture into a "consensus of the competent" was proof plain and palpable that he simply served the papal system of authority in the livery of a liberal.

Liberty insists that the individual is an authority greater than gods, hierarchs, professionals, culturists, purists, and all the other pretenders who, under one guise or another, attempt to steal into the human mind and soul through some scheme independent of their true merits. Whoever attempts to make a petty God, even out of so great a sham as Abbot's "culture," is an ally of the pope and a follower of his methods. He who sets up a "consensus of the competent," deifies purity, virtue, yea, Liberty itself, to the extent of making an authority of it, is an enemy of his kind. Purity, virtue, culture,—all these half-breed petty gods of the Free Religionists,—what are they more than somebody's undefined ideals, binding only upon themselves as individuals? This humbuggery of setting up ideals as authority was disposed of by Plato over two thousand years ago, and it is a poor comment on the "culture" of these theoretical purists that they have profited so little by his immortal dialogues.

No, there is but one way to Liberty, and all the other shifts of "advanced culture" are sure to lead to despotism in the end. That way is to accord to the individual full discretionary power in all matters

of opinion, conscience, and the conduct of life. And that power is not accorded to him, when, by any means, fair or foul, he is asked to subscribe to any god, scheme, ideal, or fiction, with the implication that the given machine is in any sense authority. All we ask of God and all his hangers-on is to get out of our sunlight, mind their own business, pay their own bills, and save their own souls, so that we can save ours,—if we choose to. But even the right to go to hell, at our own cost and on our own merits or demerits, is a sacred prerogative of Liberty.

Who Should Hang, Guiteau or God?

Garfield was so shot that the wound was fatal from the beginning.

Hence, the skill of surgeons was unavailing.

Hence, no earthly, visible power could save him.

Christians all over the country pray to an invisible power asking for "divine mercy," that the course of nature may be stayed and a miracle be wrought.

Their prayer was not heeded.

Garfield died.

Then, they assemble in humiliation, and observe a day of "fasting."

They say: "It has pleased Almighty God to remove him from our midst."

Now, how does the case stand?

Garfield died because Guiteau shot him.

And Guiteau is to be hanged as the murderer of Garfield.

This is one side of the story.

The other is that he was "removed by Almighty God."

If God "removed him," why hang Guiteau?

Was Guiteau an instrument in God's hands?

He says that he did the "will of God."

Christians confess as much: "Thou, God, hast humbled us for our sins, and taken him to thyself."

But it was Guiteau's bullet that sent him thither.

And Guiteau will be hanged.

And God will be praised, because, in his "inscrutable wisdom, he doeth all things right."

Or, Christians resign themselves to the will of this God, with "broken hearts."

And yet they know of no fate too harsh for the wretch whom their God employed.

Such is the muddle into which the world is ever getting because of its belief in the existence of personal gods, in whose hands are all the events of life.

Preaching Played Out.

Preachers are preachers,—that is, they must preach once every Sunday, at least. And what shall it be about? What are they hired *for*? What is their main and staple topic? Why, we all know full well that their sermons must be about "sin." *Sin*, in some form or other, they must bewail, or be false to their mission. We once heard a preacher declare, with all the earnestness imaginable, "What, my brethren, is the one subject of our lives? It is the *exceeding sinfulness of sin*." On ordinary occasions, it is the individual sinner whom they hold over the coals. On extraordinary ones, the nation is brought into their discourse, and receives its due allotment of "sins." Take away this sin-business, and the preacher's occupation, like Othello's, would be gone. Once it was esteemed an occupation worthy of all ambition. Mothers prayed that all their sons might be preachers. Not to go to hear the preacher was the deadliest of sins. It was an offence to God. For was not the minister the anointed of God? Did he not, in an especial and well-nigh infallible manner, know the will of God? Was it not his business to read God's word, and then "expound" it? If the original text was obscure, he could make it clear, like the noon-day. And the burden of all was, "Sin, sin, sin." Sin, and the "wrath of God," from which sinners must flee.

The present time is unlike the past in this respect. It listens to the preacher,—when there is not a greater attraction elsewhere,—but little heeds him, unless he really has somewhat to say; and that somewhat is taken for what it is worth, and not because the preacher says it. Now and then the *man* rises above the preacher, and, when this occurs, the problems of life may get treated with some breadth, and his words revive some earthly vital interest. But, for the most part, the preacher is allowed to make the burden of his discourse still of sin against deity, and go his way, so long as he keeps up the church establishment, and makes the requisite respectable showing. But, as a "man of God," he is no more known. An ornament now, a figure-head, like Victoria; not a necessity, whose demise is unthinkable.

Our space is limited, so that we can only, in a free way, voice the real sentiment of the sensible world. But this appears to be the notable fact: The world is weary of being preached at. It desires instruction, knowledge as to this present life. What is beyond it will wait for. Its sins it will slough off as it goes along, only let it have the higher aims of living clearly set forth. What is true and beautiful and just it desires to hear about. But the eternal ding-dong of "sin, sin, sin," and that by a fellow-*sinner* chanted, "wearies it," as Goethe wrote, "out and out."

All of which is submitted with the utmost personal good-will for the preachers, for whom we have no prayer for the world's ears but this,—that they, one and all, may be speedily delivered into that unsanctimonious good sense which is the salvation of all human souls, that they may have a wholesome wrath for wrong-doing, and rise above the fear of the rich and the mighty who sit in the pews.

A Baseless Charge.

MY DEAR MR. TUCKER,—It is entirely immaterial in this discussion whether my position is "odd" or otherwise. The question at issue must be settled, if settled at all, on its own merits; and no prejudice either for or against capital can affect the argument. Let us burden it with no irrelevant matter.

My question was simply this: Is a man who loans a plough entitled in equity to compensation for its use; and, if not, why not?

This question (I say it with all respect) you evade. But, until it is answered, no progress can be made in this inquiry. It is no answer to say, "Let him sell his plough." He does not sell it; he loans it, as he has a natural right to do. Another borrows it, as he has a natural right to do. I repeat: Is it just to pay for its use?

You gain nothing when you say, "Let him sell;" for, if I followed you there, it would only be to present the same question substantially in another form. You might then suggest another alternative, until we "swung round the circle," and came back to the first. So let us save time, and meet it at once. If it cannot be met where I proposed it, I do not see that it can be answered anywhere. If your theory will not bear an application to the example I stated, what is it good for? I have never seen a good reason why the plough-maker is not entitled to pay for the use of his plough.

You refer me to certain "authorities,"—Brown and Ruskin. I do not bow to authorities on questions of this nature; and I supposed you did not. I ask for a reason, not a name. Brown's proposition, which I affirm as stoutly as he does, does not answer my question. Ruskin is equally remote. He concludes that the case he examines is one of sale and purchase. That is not the case I stated at all. If there be an answer to my question, I am sure you are capable of stating it.

Yours cordially,

J. M. L. BABCOCK.

We have no wish to waste these columns in repetition; but this charge of evasion is a serious one, which can be thoroughly examined only by reviewing ground already traversed One of the objects that we had in view in beginning the publication of this journal was the annihilation of usury. If, in our first direct conflict with a supporter of usury, we have been guilty of evasion, we are unfitted for our task, and ought to abandon it to hands more competent. But we unhesitatingly plead "Not guilty."

Mr. Babcock argued that the man who makes a plough and lends it is entitled to a portion of the loaf subsequently produced, in addition to the return of his plough intact. He now asserts that we answered this by saying, "Let him sell his plough." No, we did not. On the principle that only labor can be an equitable basis of price, we argued in reply as follow.: "The maker of the plough certainly is entitled to pay for his work. Full pay, paid once; no more. That pay, is the plough itself, or its equivalent in other marketable products, said equivalent being measured by the amount of labor employed in their production." True or false, this answer is direct and tangible; in no sense is it evasive. Then Mr. Babcock asked this other and distinct question: "If he furnishes his ploughs only on condition that they be returned to him in as good state as when taken away, how is he to get his bread?" We replied that we did not know, and that, if he was such a fool as to do so, we did not care. Nothing evasive here, either; on the contrary, utter frankness. Touched a little, however, by Mr. Babcock's sympathy with the usurer thus threatened with starvation, we ventured the suggestion that, instead of lending his plough to the farmer, he might sell it to him, and thus get money wherewith to buy bread of the baker. This advice was gratuitous, we know; possibly it was impertinent, also: but was it evasive? Not in the least.

Finally, thinking that Mr. Babcock might agree, as we do, with Novalis that a man's belief gains quite infinitely the moment another mind is convinced thereof, we called his attention to two other minds in harmony with ours on the point now in dispute, A. B. Brown and John Ruskin. But not as authorities, in Mr. Babcock's sense of the word; what Liberty thinks of authorities is told at some length in another column of this issue's editorial pages. Still, Mr. Brown being Mr. Babcock's candidate for secretary of state, and party candidates being supposedly *representative* in things fundamental, we deemed it not out of place to cite a proposition from Mr. Brown that seemed to us, *on its face*, directly contradictory of Mr. Babcock. To our astonishment Mr. Babcock accepts it as not inconsistent with his position, at the same time declaring it irrelevant. Argument ends here. If we hold up two objects, one of which, to our eyes, is red and the other blue, and Mr. Babcock declares that both are red, it is useless to discuss the matter. One of us is color-blind. The ultimate verdict of mankind will decide which. In quoting from Mr. Ruskin, however, we did not ask Mr. Babcock to accept him as authority, but to point out the weakness of an argument drawn from an illustration similar to Mr. Babcock's. Mr. Babcock replies by denying the similarity, saying that Ruskin "concludes that the case he examines is one of sale and purchase." Let us see. Ruskin is examining a story told by Bastiat in illustration and defence of usury. After printing Bastiat's version of it, he abridges it thus, stripping away all mystifying clauses:

> James makes a plane, lends it to William on 1st of January for a year. William gives him a plank for the loan of it, wears it out, and makes another for James, which he gives him on 31st December. On 1st January he again borrows the new one; and the arrangement is repeated continuously. The position of William therefore is, that he makes a plane every 31st of December; lends it to James till the next day, and pays James a plank annually for the privilege of lending it to him on that evening.

Substitute, in the foregoing, "plough" for "plane," and "loaf" or "slice" for "plank," and the story differs in no essential point from Mr. Babcock's. How monstrously unjust the transaction is can be plainly seen. Ruskin next shows how this unjust transaction may be changed into a just one:

> If James did not lend the plane to William, he could only get his gain of a plank by working with it himself, and wearing it out himself. When he had worn it out at the end of the year, he would, therefore, have to make another for himself. William, working with it instead, gets the advantage instead, which he must, therefore, pay James his plank for; and return to James, what James would, if he had not lent his plane, then have had;—not a new plane—but the worn-out one. James must make a new one for himself, as he would have had to do if no William had existed; and if William likes to borrow it again for another plank—all is fair. That is to say, clearing the story of its nonsense, that James makes a plane annually, and sells it to William for its proper price, which, in kind, is a new plank.

It is *this latter transaction*, wholly different from the former, that Ruskin pronounces a "sale," having "nothing whatever to do with principal or with interest." And yet, according to Mr. Babcock, "the case he examines [Bastiat's, of course] is one of sale and purchase." We understand now how it is that Mr. Babcock can charge us with evasion. He evidently

conceives his method of meeting a point to be straightforward. If it be so, certainly ours is evasive. If, on the other hand, our course has been straightforward, evasion is too mild a term for his. It is better described as flat misstatement; purely careless, of course, but scarcely less excusable than if wilful. Again we invite our friend to a *careful* examination (and refutation, if possible) of the arguments advanced, to which we add another in printing a translation from the writings of the honored Auguste Blanqui, the scientist and revolutionist, whose life was one long sacrifice and martyrdom for Liberty.

Bastiat's Fable.

[FROM AUGUSTE BLANQUI'S "CAPITAL AND LABOR."]

All the old economists neglected the question of the legitimacy of usury. This question is recent, dating in the public mind scarcely farther back than 1848.

Bastiat seized upon it and made it the text of his discussions with Proudhon, the socialistic champion of that period. The arguments of his fellow-writers, whatever their form, do not differ from his own. On this question of interest, then, may be refuted, in Bastiat's person, all political economy.

For the rest, the form of the fable that he devises to demonstrate the legitimacy of usury has been employed also by others. They use it with assurance,—one might say, with presumption. They seem to believe themselves irrefutable, and treat their adversaries after the manner of grand lords towards the common people. Bastiat notably assumes an air of overweening conceit thoroughly ridiculous. He seems to fear, in his argument, lest some one may accuse him of storming gates already open, so Jove-like is his style.

James first exchanges his plane for money. He lends the money to William, and William exchanges the money for a saw. The transaction is divided into two factors. But thereby its nature is not changed. It none the less contains all the elements of a direct loan.

There lies the sophistry and the delusion. The money ceases to be what it should be, a simple instrument of exchange. It abandons this beneficent rôle to assume a harmful one. From a friend it becomes an enemy; from a benefit, a scourge. From an auxiliary it becomes an obstacle; from an aid, a barrier. This metamorphosis is effected during its passage through the hands of James, who uses the coin that he holds to fleece his neighbor. For he does not exchange it at par for a product of equal value, as was done for him in the substitution of the coin for his product. For he obtains at the end of a year either a portion of William's product equal in value to his own with a bonus in addition, or his money increased by one-twentieth. His duty was to buy with his coin a product equal in value to that which he had sold for the coin. He has wickedly retained the money which he should have restored to circulation by the complementary operation of the exchange,—namely, the barter of the coin for a product equal in value to the first. If he did not wish to proceed immediately to this barter, it was free to him to choose his hour, provided he should ultimately fulfil the fair and just condition of exchange,—an equality of the two values exchanged through the mediation of the coin.

As for the pretended service of the loan, service deserving reward, that is a sham. If James had needed his tool, he would have used it. Apparently he did not remain idle during the year that William had possession of his plane. If he lent his plane, he did so because he could get along without it. To say that he has made a sacrifice, that he has deprived himself of a useful object for the benefit of his neighbor, is pure hypocrisy. He labored during the year of the loan, and received the price of his product. He has no claim on the product of William. Whether William used the plane or not, it is sufficient for him to return it to James in the condition that he received it. He owes him nothing further.

"But why should I lend," says James, "if nothing is to come back to me" for the service that I render? "I will refuse, then."

Refuse, if you like. But you cannot escape this dilemma. Either you need your plane, or you do not. If it is detrimental to your interests to part with it, keep it and use it. If you can dispense with it, if, without loss to yourself, you can do something else, to demand, as reward for a service that costs you nothing, one-twentieth of the price of your plane, besides a new plane, is simply a swindle.

To prohibitionist legislators:

Why would you make us coolly think?
If you must govern, we must drink.

A just published anecdote of Chief Justice John Marshall and John C. Calhoun says that Marshall, once meeting Calhoun on the street at Washington, said, "You seem to be in profound thought; of what are you thinking?" Calhoun replied, "I am thinking of the origin of government." "And on what does government depend?" "On the production and distribution of wealth." "And on what does the production and distribution of wealth depend?" "That is what I have not discovered," said Calhoun.

OH, FIRE!

Oh! Fire no eye beholdeth,
Ere planets were begun
Kindled within the Inmost—
Fierce, flaming, blazing sun!

Oh, Fire whose heat preserveth
The Truth of truth alive!
Thou givest to Being beauty;
All souls by thee survive.

Oh, Fire aye melting heaven,
And burning up the earth—
'Tis by thy fierce endeavor
Now, Liberty hath birth.

M.

Our European Letter.

[From Liberty's Special Correspondent.]

LONDON, September 19.—Last week two men desired to meet, perhaps in order to batch some new scheme of wholesale slaughter. Their meeting would not have been extraordinary but for the fact that, in their whole vast empires, Mr. William and Mr. Alexander could not find a single spot, in spite of all their mamelukes, soldiers, police agents, and spies, where to concoct their projects for future murder or robbery. No, in all Prussia, in all Russia, there was not a single town, not a single village, not a single hamlet, where these two bandits considered themselves safe! They had to go on board of war ships, far away from land, on the Eastern sea, in the midst of waves that must have lashed their vessels' sides with fury at having to listen to the scoundrels' plots. This, at least, is one good result of the policy of Terrorism; and the day is not far off when no man will be found to prefer such a condition of perpetual fright and dread to a tranquil, unmolested life.

A so-called "Universal Socialistic Congress" will be held next month at Berne. [Cable dispatches announce that it has been held at Chur.—EDITOR.] After having appealed in tones most pitiful to all existing and non-existing authorities in Switzerland, after having given solemn assurance that only "respectable," orderly, and lawful subjects shall be discussed on that occasion, and after promising that, if any black sheep shall find their way among the immaculate flock and have the impertinence to say anything about matters not on the schedule of "lawful" subjects, they will be summarily ejected into the fresh air, this conglomeration of eight-hour men, tobacco monopolists, and kindred reformers has obtained the gracious permission of the Swiss government to explain, within its territory, the merits of their different patent medicines. That the revolutionists of Europe have nothing to hope from this meeting and will utterly ignore the same, you may easily understand. This congress, therefore, in spite of all its trumpeting, is of inferior significance.

In Germany everything is quiet, the lull before the storm. The government, in order not to lose the habit, expels every day its regular number of Socialists, and the so-called Social Democrats shower daily on the government fresh acclamations of the new "imperial socialistic" policy of the iron chancellor.

All this will be changed in a few weeks, and the now formed Executive Committee of the German Revolutionists will very soon give to this glorious empire as much trouble as its Russian namesake gives to the czar.

The imitators in France of the strategy of the German Socialists made, at the last elections, a complete fiasco. In all France their whole party could muster scarcely more than ten thousand votes.

The "respectable" newspapers are saying that things in Spain look very "gloomy." King Alfonso is suffering from a very severe "diarrhœa," and has already packed his trunks. He considers it a very disagreeable phenomenon that in the last few months over a hundred manufactories have been burned down.

In Italy dissatisfaction is making its way in the guise of religious antipathies; for the keen observer the true cause of all the recent disturbances is easily found.

During the last few months I have made inquiries concerning an individual styling himself "John Baker," who from time to time cuts a rather pretentious figure in a few American papers. I am authorized by the Polish and Russian organizations at Geneva to declare that

"John Baker" never was, and is not now, a member of any socialistic or revolutionary organization within their cognizance; that

"John Baker" is entirely unknown to any of our partisans at Lemberg, Warschau, St. Petersburg, Geneva, or London; that

"John Baker" has never received information from any of our organizations or from any member thereof; that

"John Baker," though there is no positive proof showing him to be a spy in the service of the Russian government, is an individual against whom every revolutionist has reason to be on guard; and that, in short,

"John Baker" is a perfect humbug.

So much for the "special" correspondent of that "newsy," "highly intelligent" (please stop laughing!) journal, the Springfield "Republican."

Last week I visited our friend Most at Clerkenwell prison. He wears prison garb, and in all respects is treated as a common thief. He has to repair old clothes, and is allowed to neither write nor read anything but the pious tracts showered upon him daily in his cell by some kind soul who does not yet despair of saving him from the devil's claws. All intercourse with the outer world is cut off, except that he has permission, once in three months, to see one of his friends for five minutes behind iron bars and in the presence of a jailor. I will make no futile attempt to emphasize these facts by any comments of my own. Fortunately his health is good, and he hopes to be able ere long to repay with interest his debt to those who have deprived him of his liberty.

Kropotkine is staying, for the present, at Thonon, a small village on French territory, five miles from Geneva. His wife will pass her examination in medicine sometime in October, after which he will proceed to London, where he will give a series of lectures on Russia and take up, probably, his permanent residence.

Crumbs from Liberty's Table.

An arbitrary increase of wages or an arbitrary decrease of the hours of labor, if an inequitable distribution of the product continues, is only a mitigation of the rigors of servitude, not a destruction of the slavery in which the masses are held to those whom the New York "Times" aptly describes as "the small class whose occupation is the difficult one of entertaining themselves."—*New York Truth.*

The old truth that to suppress freedom of speech is to cause, stimulate, and protect recklessness of action is an old truth, but it is one which needs repetition in every crisis of the world's history. To create secrecy is to protect conspirators; the publicity of crime is the protection of honest men.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

The spoils system will not be destroyed by changing the methods of dividing the spoils.—*Bullion.*

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